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pretty as my 'Banda Neira,' observed the girl, looking with wide dark eyes at the scimitar-shaped beach, and the tall, leaning palms that hung over it.

"Master, be good place this, but plenty bad boy he stop along here," declared Bo, raising himself from the bottom of the boat to look about him. "I no savvy that fellow bushman stop here. I too much fright along him."

"By and by you too much fright along me; hold your tongue," was Gore's reply. I could see he did not want to alarm Isola unnecessarily. Bo squatted on the gunwale, holding on with his black toes like a monkey, and stared hard at the place as we went up. He was chewing tobacco, and he spat and spat continually in the water, with a vigor that seemed to be the expression of some unspoken feeling.

There was a little pier of piled white coral rock built out into the deepest part of the bay. We ran the boat up to this, tied up, and most thankfully disembarked. Even two days in an open boat is enough to stiffen the limbs and weary the mind with a feeling of confinement.

The rocks up to high water were covered with fine edible oysters. Bo was anxious to stop and sample them, and we told him he might do so: we wanted some one to stay with the boat while we went up to the plantation. New Britain natives are terrible thieves, and it was ten to one we might find all movables taken out of the yawl if we left her without a guard. So we gave Bo a tomahawk for protection, and charged him not to let any of the plantation boys approach the boat.

"Of course, they're tamed and civilized boys on a plantation, more or less," said Gore; "but I wouldn't trust them near my stores."

WE left the pier behind, passed through the belt of cocoanuts that circled the bay, and came out on a most lovely avenue of shorn grass, bordered by magnificent flowering trees. There were coral trees, like bouquets of scarlet geranium, forty feet high and fifty feet across; kapok trees, with flowers like golden stars, and hard brown pods upon their branches, bursting open to show the silky white cotton within. There were frangipannis, mangos, green as nothing but a mango tree can be; trees like an acacia, with drooping flowers of pink and white; trees that I could not and can not tell the name of, but that were as tall as an English lime, and had bunches of blossom like heliotrope in appearance, smelling like new-mown hay. All these had been planted about the same time, perhaps eight years before, and set in two orderly ranks along the cleared ground leading to the house.

The walk up to the house was a pretty long one, and we had time to notice, as we went, that the place seemed to be holidaying, for not a boy was at work on any part of the plantation. The shining rows of coffee bushes looked rather ill-weeded. Somebody had carelessly abandoned hoes and clearing knives here and there among them, and the iron was red with rust. Among the star-shaped avenues of rubber, radiating out toward the horizon every way one looked, there was no one busy tapping the trees; no small white metal cans were hung against the trunks, filling up with milky latex. The door of the copra house was shut; a great heap of unopened cocoanuts was piled up against it. And still there were no boys.

I began to feel that there was something about this I did not altogether like.

We walked up to the house, a neat little wooden bungalow with an iron roof, hidden away in a cluster of mango trees. Here, at least, it seemed there was some one, for the door was open, and fowls were clucking and strutting about in a pleasant, homely way. Gore took a step aside, and cast a look at their feed-dish. It was empty and scraped, and the water-trough had not a drop in it.

"Wait a bit," he said, and carried the trough to a tank. The fowls gathered about him, clucking wildly. He filled the

trough, and they fought with one another to get at it. He stood watching them narrowly.

"How kind you are to animals!" said Isola, looking at him with simple admiration. "Do you think," she went on, putting her hand up to her head, which was covered by a hat of rudely plaited palm leaves, and looking down at her stained and tattered dress—"do you think Mr. Beyer's wife will be able to spare me some clothes? I feel such a disgraceful object that I'm almost ashamed to go in and ask her!"

"Suppose you don't," said Gore, catching quickly at the suggestion. "Suppose you stop here for a minute with Corbet, while I go up to the house and tell the Beyers we're coming. Then, if you feel very badly about being seen by strangers in such a state, I'll bring you down a dress."

"Thank you," said Isola. "How kind you always are!"

"Stay here with her," said Gore, throwing me a glance.

I stayed. We sat down on the edge of the trough, for our legs felt shaky after the days in the boat,—and I tried hard not to remain silent. I tried to talk about everything—about the avenue, about the pretty situation of the house, about the bright blue hills behind, about the fowls.

Isola kept breaking in with remarks about Beyer and his wife—what they could give us in the way of clothes and food, whether there would be a schooner along presently; but I talked fast, and answered nothing. I think she must have felt me rather rude.

Presently Gore came out on the veranda and walked down the steps. He seemed out of breath, as if he had been doing hard work.

"Lord, I am hot!" he said, and made straight for the tank, where he ran water over his hands and arms for quite a while. Then he came up to us.

"I'm sorry to say," he said, "the Beyers aren't here. They seem to have gone away."

"Gone! Where to?" asked Isola disappointedly.

"I can't say. Gone for good, I should think."

"Gone home, you mean?"

"I suppose so," said Gore, without looking at her. "Yes, I should think they have. The place will no doubt be taken over by some one else. It's disappointing; but people are apt to come and go suddenly in these places. It isn't as civilized as your Banda Neira."

"What are we going to do?" asked Isola.

Her pretty pale face was a shade paler. I could see how she had counted on this little oasis of civilization, though she was too plucky to complain.

"Borrow a few things and get back to the boat," answered Gore. "You can come in, if you like. The house is almost all locked up."

I thought I had heard his feet tramping through more rooms than one while we were waiting outside; but I made no comment. I felt that Red Bob was anxious to have a word alone with me, and all my wits were engaged in getting it. Isola walked up the path to the house, pausing now and then to admire the bushes of flowering plants that had been set on each side of the path. I stepped aside for a minute, and asked:

"What is it?"

Gore, with his eyes narrowed till they looked more than ever like a cat's, told me in a word; and the sunlight of the glorious day seemed to die out in horror as he spoke:

"Beyer and his wife and child have been murdered. Must have been done about a week ago. I got the bodies into a back room, and locked the door. She needn't suspect anything. Take some clothes and food, and come as fast as you can lick down to the beach. I'm going to see if the boat's all right. We oughtn't to have left her, but one couldn't guess—Keep Isola out of sight of the avenue. If the boat's all right, she need know nothing. Don't delay."

To be continued next week



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